

loser of any election must have to accept and respect the will of the electorate.

The old process assured the presumption of fairness. The new process offers none. Acceptance of an election cannot be obtained by browbeating. It can only be earned by a full and open review of the integrity of the election establishing for all Americans that their vote was fairly and accurately recorded and that the result speaks as the will of the Nation. And I eagerly await that day.

THE POLITICAL STATUS OF PUERTO RICO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MURPHY) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MURPHY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise to discuss the political status of Puerto Rico, which is home to more than three million American citizens.

In my home State of Florida, there are now 1.2 million people who were born in Puerto Rico or who have Puerto Rican roots. That is more than any other State.

Every month, many Puerto Ricans move to Florida and other States in search of a brighter future. The island has been through so much—from the economic crisis, to Hurricane Maria, to the earthquakes, to COVID-19.

In Florida, we will always welcome these families with open arms, but I want them to have more opportunities in Puerto Rico. I don't want them to feel like they have no alternative but to leave their beloved home.

In my Orlando district, most of my Puerto Rican constituents have family members and friends still living on the island. Because they care deeply about Puerto Rico, I care deeply about Puerto Rico.

But every Member of Congress should care about Puerto Rico because Puerto Ricans are our fellow American citizens. We are part of the same American family, even though the hard truth is that the United States hasn't always treated Puerto Rico very well.

Our country now has the chance to do right by Puerto Rico.

That is because on November 3, Puerto Rico held a vote on its political status. In a referendum, the people of Puerto Rico were asked the following question: "Should Puerto Rico be admitted immediately into the Union as a State?" Yes or no?

Even though Puerto Rico has been a U.S. territory since 1898, and the island residents have been American citizens since 1917, this was the first time the people of Puerto Rico were asked this simple and direct question.

According to the results, over 52 percent of voters, more than 623,000 people, answered "yes," while nearly 48 percent of voters answered "no."

The vote was fair, and the results were clear.

At this point, it is beyond dispute that a majority of the American citi-

zens living in Puerto Rico want the territory to become a State.

Now, are there people in Puerto Rico who would prefer for the island to remain a territory or to become a sovereign nation? Absolutely. And that is completely valid and legitimate.

But when it comes to the political destiny of a place, the views of the minority cannot trump or take precedence over the views of the majority. That would turn the concept of democracy on its head. Votes matter.

And now that the people of Puerto Rico have spoken, the Federal Government must listen. Whether it is the White House or Congress, whether it is Democrats or Republicans, we must respect and respond to this result.

To do otherwise would be immoral or undemocratic, beneath the dignity of our great Nation.

Let me be crystal clear on two points so there is no misunderstanding.

First, it is well known that I personally support statehood because I think it will provide the people of Puerto Rico with democracy and equality and political power and a better quality of life. They do not have these things right now and they deserve to have them.

By the way, I am an immigrant and a refugee. I grew up in Virginia speaking Vietnamese with my parents. One of the main reasons I love America is because it is a mix of people from different cultures with different traditions who speak different languages. I reject the notion that statehood would weaken Puerto Rico's beautiful culture or its proud traditions or affect the island's use of the Spanish language.

Having said all this, even though I personally favor statehood, it is not my place to substitute my views for the views of the people of Puerto Rico.

If they wished to remain a territory or become a nation, I would honor that wish.

However, the majority of voters have chosen statehood, and so I intend to respect that choice.

Finally, let me say this: I am a Democrat, but my support for statehood has nothing to do with any prediction about whether Puerto Rico would be a blue State or a red State. History teaches us that such predictions tend to be wrong, and I personally think Puerto Rico would be a swing State that elects both Democrats and Republicans.

However, I would support statehood for Puerto Rico if it were as Republican as Wyoming or as Democratic as Vermont. To oppose statehood because you fear the people will not vote the way you want them to vote violates the most basic principles of justice and democracy, and I have zero patience for that.

In the coming weeks, I will work with Puerto Rico's governor-elect, resident commissioner, and legislative assembly, with the incoming Biden administration, and with my congressional colleagues on both sides of the

aisle to determine the best path forward.

I cannot promise a particular result, but I can promise I will never stop fighting for equality for the American citizens of Puerto Rico.

CELEBRATING VETERANS DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, last week on November 11, we celebrated Veterans Day, and I rise today to thank each and every one of the men and women who have donned the uniform of the United States military; to express my gratitude for the individuals who have served to secure and protect our most precious freedoms; to acknowledge the sacrifices that these brave Americans have endured to make America the country that it is today.

In the Pentagon, in the stairwell to the office of the Secretary of Defense, there is a painting of a soldier in gear ready for deployment surrounded by family at the altar of a church.

Accompanying that painting is a verse of scripture from the Holy Scripture from the Book of Isaiah. And it reads: "Who shall I send? Who will go for me?" In the painting, that is from the Gospel and the word of God. That painting communicates that our Nation's veterans have answered that call.

Recently, I was approached about co-sponsoring H.R. 2350, the Ghost Army Congressional Gold Medal Act. A 16-year-old young lady named Madeline reached out to my office to share the story of her great grandfather's service.

Her great grandfather served in the Ghost Army during World War II. The Ghost Army was a tactical deception unit that sought to undermine the Axis Power efforts in Germany during the war.

Madeline shared with me that there are two gentlemen from my district who served in the Ghost Army, Tom Ebeling from Bradford and Claude Blake from Patton.

There are many fascinating stories from the Ghost Army that were kept secret for decades after the war. It wasn't until 1996 that this information was declassified, and their bravery could be shared with us all.

I would also like to mention that Veterans Day took place during National Apprenticeship Week, and this is a great opportunity to remind everyone what incredible value veterans add to our workforce.

Veterans exhibit proven leadership, higher retention rates, have the ability to work well under pressure, and they have a strong work ethic.

Our veterans are highly trained and highly skilled. They deserve our support while deployed and when they return home. One of the best ways to do